Biography of William Innes Homer

From the pages of books and journals to advisory boards on both sides of the Atlantic, to the lectern of his college classroom, William Innes Homer has provided guidance and instruction in art history for over forty years, in settings local, national, and abroad. A lifelong devotee to art and art history, Homer dedicated his professional work to the study of nineteenth and early twentieth-century American and European artwork, with a special interest in works considered “avant-garde” or “progressive.”
It is an interesting note to make that both Homer and Robert Henri began their careers largely focused on a career solely in art, yet went on to become highly successful instructors. To begin his formal entry into the world of art scholarship, Homer received his bachelor’s in Art History from Princeton University, where he graduated magna cum laude. He went on to complete master’s and doctoral work at Harvard University, and held instructional positions with Princeton and Cornell Universities, prior to his hire by the Art History department at the University of Delaware, the institution to which he would devote nearly half his life.

At the University of Delaware, William Homer served as a professor from 1966-1984, and Chair of the Art History department from 1966-1981 and from 1988-1993. He was awarded the H. Rodney Sharp professorship in 1984, and served in this position until his retirement in 1999, when he was elected as a Professor Emeritus. In his time at Delaware, Homer advised almost seventy theses in both the doctoral and master’s programs, and was the recipient of several awards, including the 1980 Francis Alison Faculty Award. Homer has also served on boards and committees as diverse as the National Portrait Galley in London, the Smithsonian Institution’s Archives of American Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Thomas Eakins House, and as a member of the Editorial Board for the American Art Journal.

William Homer has authored many academic papers, which have received publication in journals such as American Art Journal, Art News, The Paul J. Getty Museum Journal, and American Art Review, to provide only a small sampling. He has also written eight books on artists within his period of preferred study, including two on photographer Alfred Stieglitz, an acclaimed text on Thomas Eakins, and Robert Henri and His Circle, the work for which this collection of papers served as the basis.

Biography of Robert Henri

Considered by many art historians and experts to be one of the greatest driving forces in the early-twentieth century revolution in American painting styles, Robert Henri was born in 1865 into surroundings seemingly unlikely for a now-renowned New York City artist. The son of Theresa Gatewood Cozad and Robert Cozad, a one-time professional gambler turned pioneer settler, Robert Henri, born Robert Henry Cozad, was raised with his brother in various settlements in the West before eventually moving to Atlantic City, New Jersey, putting Robert in close proximity to the art culture of New York and Philadelphia.

Interested in art for as long as he could remember, Henri spent most of his adolescence torn between making his way with artistry, or pursuing a career as a writer (his book, The Art Spirit, would eventually allow him to realize this other dream). His parents wisely allowed him to explore his interest in both paths, knowing that he would choose the one he felt was right when ready. At age 21, Henri made his choice and enrolled in Philadelphia’s Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he barely missed having the opportunity to study under Thomas Eakins, but still benefited from the instruction of Thomas Anshutz, Eakins’ former pupil and torch-bearer for his instructional
approach. Although unimpressed with Henri’s initial offerings, Anshutz came to be a great fan of the younger artist.

Upon graduating from the Pennsylvania Academy, Henri traveled to Paris to study at the Académie Julian, which was in Henri’s time the most popular art school in the city. Henri enjoyed his time there, but found himself disenchanted with the generic “prettiness” of European, and to an increasing extent, American artwork, and along with his friends, sought to redefine the boundaries of acceptable subject material and technique. Henri and his friends saw beauty in truth and believed that scenes and people from real, modern life should be celebrated in works of art. The public and art critics did not agree with this philosophy, and later referred to Henri and his circle of artists as “the Ashcan School” for their devotion to the imagery of common life.

Henri returned the United States in 1891, eventually choosing to relocate to New York City in 1900, which would serve as his home for the rest of his life. While Henri created art his entire life and initially envisioned making his mark purely as an artist, fate would conspire to lead him down a different path. Though he was assigned several classes while completing his schooling in Philadelphia, it was in New York that he realized his true calling in the art world— the role of the instructor. It is this contribution to American art for which he is most recognized by contemporary art scholars— though his artwork is considered to show a high degree of high technical skill. Beginning with a reluctantly taken appointment to Veltin School for Girls in 1900, Robert Henri eventually came to understand that he possessed a natural talent for encouraging and inspiring students, which would lead to a position at the New York School of Art, and, eventually, the creation of Henri’s own art school. There, his philosophies, with strong groundings in the Thomas Eakins school of thought, were passed on to his student body, with an emphasis on the discovery of individual style over rigorous training in strict technique. It should come as little surprise that, as a result, some of the best-known early twentieth century American artists were Henri alumni: Edward Hopper, George W. Bellows, to name a few. Henri would commonly take promising students under his wing, continually updating “The Eight” with fresh artistic talent.

Robert Henri married twice, first in 1898 to Linda Craige, a Philadelphian and former student of his. Though it was a loving marriage, Linda was of a weak constitution and spent large quantities of time away from Henri and their New York home, due to recurring illness. Upon her death in 1905, Henri remained a bachelor for three years, until marrying cartoonist Marjorie Organ of New York in 1908. Robert Henri shared his life with Marjorie until his death in 1929 at age 64.
Scope and Contents Note

As this collection was created in the process of writing a biography, the material follows two main divisions: information on and related to Robert Henri’s life and work, and information related to William Homer’s authoring of the book. The bulk of information related to Robert Henri is made up of correspondence from the artist to friends and family, with some incoming correspondence included as well. There is also a collection of photographs which are largely of Henri’s artwork, though a couple of images of the artist in the classroom are included. Also included in the collection is information on past gallery exhibits and other works that have come as a result of the study of Robert Henri, including lecture and symposium notes, and information on several books and short films.

As the author of *Robert Henri and his Circle*, William Homer spent approximately five years formally undertaking the research on the text, a labor of love considered long overdue in American art study. During that time, he compiled a great deal of correspondence, archival material, and research notes, which comprise the bulk of material related to him in this collection. Much of the correspondence is between Homer and the holding institutions of works of art by and information on Robert Henri, seeking rights to use the materials in his book.

Upon completion and publication of his text, William Homer appears to have gained recognition as an authority on the work and life of Robert Henri and his group of friends, often known as “The Eight.” As a result, consultative notes and correspondence focused on other researchers’ projects are also included with the collection, as well as a draft of one of these works, and a script for a short biographical film.
Description of the Collection

Series I. William Innes Homer Correspondence

Correspondence between William Homer and various individuals, galleries, museums, and societies instrumental in the completion of the text Robert Henri and His Circle. Correspondence has been arranged alphabetically.

Box 1
Folder
   1  Correspondence, A-D
   2  Allen, H.B.
   3  Borton, Sam
   4  Bender, William
   5  Boss, Mrs. Homer
   6  Chapellier, Robert (Chapellier Galleries)
   7  Clark, Elizabeth Jenks
   8  Crispo, Andrew
   9  Curator of Paintings, Baltimore Museum of Art
  10  duBois, William
  11  Dzwonkoski, Peter (Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library)
  12  Egbert, Donald
  13  Correspondence, F
  14  Janet Fleischer Art Gallery
  15  Flexner, James Thomas
  16  Foss, Julian
  17  Foss, Karen
  18  Frankenstein, Alfred V.
  19  Frauwirth, Sidney
  20  Freeze, Alys (Mrs.)
  21  Freyer, Grattan (Irish correspondence)
  22  Correspondence, G
  23  Gatewood, Robert
24 Geske, Norman A.
25 Gibbs, Linda Jones
26 Glackens, Ira
27 Grafly, William
28 Correspondence, H-I
29 Hambidge, Jay
30 Hobman, Viola Smith
31 Howard, Howell (Mrs.)
32 Correspondence, K-L
33 Koch, Helen
34 Kruse, Alexander Z.
35 Kuhn, Brenda
36 Kwiat, Joseph
37 Lawson, Mariita G.
38 LeClair, John C.
39 Levinson, A.F.
40 Londoner, Amy
41 Luster, Guy
42 Correspondence, M-N
43 Maria-Theresa
44 Marlais, Michael

Box 2
Folder
1 Menke, Betty
2 McCoy, Garnett
3 McIntyre, Robert
4 McKenney, Yvonne
5 Mora, F. Luis
6 Morrison, Hugh
7  Morse, Mildred
8  O-P
9  Pach, Nikifora
10 Bailey, Elizabeth (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)
11 Perlman, Bennard
12 Prendergast, Maurice
13 Correspondence, R
14 Rewald, John
15 Ryerson, Margery
16 Correspondence, S
17 Sammartino, Peter (1969)
18 Seton, Mrs. Ernest Thompson
19 Shinn papers, AAA
20 Re: Sloan, John
21 Smith, J.
22 Smola, Mrs. E.E.
23 Stevens, David F.
24 Stevens, George
25 Story, Ala (Mrs.)
26 Strasser, Edna
27 T-Z
28 Tice, Clara
29 Turner, Sally
30 Walker, John
31 Walker, Maynard
32 Walton, Kathleen O’Donnell
33 Woodruff, Fern
34 Correspondence relating to George Bellows
35 The Eight & related AAA letters of WH
36 General Correspondence
37 Correspondence on Robert Henri (miscellaneous)
38 Research Correspondence & Materials
Series II. William Homer—Consultation Correspondence & Working Notes

Upon completing his text on Robert Henri, Homer became seen as somewhat of an authority on Henri and his circle of associates, and was occasionally sought out as a consultant on materials related to Henri and members of the Ashcan School and the Eight. This series is comprised almost entirely of materials related to this consulting work, though some of Homer’s working material is included where it was originally filed.

Box 3
Folder
1 Information on John & Helen Farr Sloan
2 Assorted notes on Robert Henri
3 Dabo, Leon
4 Homer Boss materials
5 *House of Color* draft (book on Homer Boss)
6 C.K. Chatterton Exhibition
7 Letter: Gertrude Arnstein to “Allie”
8 George Bellows material
9 Robert Henri Genealogy, Time Line
10 Robert Henri as a teacher
11 Miscellaneous notes on Robert Henri & The Eight [1]
12 Miscellaneous notes on Robert Henri & The Eight [2]
13 Exhibition of Independent Artists of 1910
14 National Arts Club, Special Exhibition of Contemporary Art, 1908
15 The Black Mirror, #7, 1912 (photocopy)
16 American Art Education influence; Dow, Hambidge
17 Robert Henri “Maratta diagram”
18 Thesis by Danielle Melby
19 Article on “The Art Spirit”
Series III. Robert Henri Correspondence (photocopies)

This series is comprised of letters both to and from Robert Henri. Henri was a prolific writer; therefore the series is dominated by outgoing Henri correspondence. Henri was particularly dutiful in reporting back to his mother, whom he referred to as “Missus.” Original order has largely been maintained, and is loosely chronological. Series is divided into two subseries: Correspondence from Robert Henri, and Correspondence to Robert Henri. Please note that in keeping with original order, to-and-from correspondence paired together has remained together.

Guidance on Use: A large portion of these letters are photocopies of the originals held in the Robert Henri Papers at Yale University. Letters bearing this distinction have been noted as such in the finding aid, and within the physical collection. Use of these materials will require proper permission granted by Yale University.

Subseries A: Letters from Henri
Please note that Folder 28 in Subseries B also contains letters from Henri.

Box 4
Folder
  1 Linda letters
  2 Undated correspondence
  3 1886-1891
  4 Robert Henri to Boss, 1892
  5 Robert Henri letter from a dealer, early 1893
  6 Robert Henri letter to Harley, 1894
  7 Robert Henri letter to family, 1894
  8 Robert Henri letter to “folks”, c. 1895
  9 Robert Henri letters to others, 1900
 10 Robert Henri letters to family, 1900-1901 (Yale)
 11 Macbeth, March 26, 1901
 12 Robert Henri letters to family, 1902 (Yale)
 13 Robert Henri letters to family, 1903 (Yale)
 14 Robert Henri letters to family, 1904 (Yale)
 15 Robert Henri letters to family, 1905 (Yale)
 16 Loose pages (Yale)
17 Correspondence, 1906
18 Robert Henri letters to family, 1906 Spain (Yale)
19 1907 (Yale)

Box 5
Folder
1 Robert Henri photocopies, 1907-1908 & missus
2 General Correspondence, 1908
3 Robert Henri to mother, 1910-1911
4 Correspondence, 1911
5 Correspondence, 1912
6 Robert Henri to mother, 1912
7 Correspondence, 1913
8 Robert Henri to mother, 1913
9 Correspondence, 1914
10 Robert Henri to mother, 1914 (#678-688at)
11 Correspondence, 1915
12 Robert Henri to mother, 1915 (#693-744)
13 Correspondence, 1916
14 Robert Henri to mother, 1916 (Yale, not numbered)
15 Correspondence, 1917
16 Robert Henri to mother, 1917 (#745-821b)
17 Correspondence, 1918
18 Robert Henri to mother, 1918 (#822-888)
19 Correspondence, 1919 (Yale)
20 Robert Henri to McAuley, 1919 (Zalesch)
21 Robert Henri to Bellows, 1919 (Yale)
Box 6
Folder
1 Robert Henri to mother, 1919 (#889-918p)
2 Correspondence, 1920
3 Robert Henri to mother, 1920 (#918g-928; end)
4 Robert Henri to the Sloans, September 19, 1920
5 Correspondence, 1921
6 Correspondence, 1922
7 Correspondence, 1923
8 Correspondence, 1924
9 Correspondence, 1925
10 Correspondence, 1926
11 Robert Henri to Miss Anthony on biography, March 3, 1926
12 Correspondence, 1927
13 Correspondence, 1928
14 Robert Henri Miscellaneous Correspondence (primarily to Sloan)

Subseries B: Correspondence to Robert Henri

Box 6
Folder
15 Correspondence, 1890-1899 (Yale)
16 Correspondence, 1900-1908
17 Correspondence, 1909-1913
18 Letter from Barnes, December 25 1912
19 Correspondence, 1914-1920
20 Correspondence, 1918 July
21 Correspondence, 1920-1929
22 Letters from Ireland, 1924
23 Miscellaneous letters
24 George Bellows to Robert Henri, 1920-1922 (Yale)
25 Between George Bellows and Robert Henri, 1917-1924
26 Correspondence regarding Thomas Eakins, 1917-1928
27 Correspondence between J. Sloan and Henri letters, 1894-1920’s (typed copies)
28 Henri to Sloan, 1901-1908
29 John Sloan letters to Robert Henri, 1898-1911
30 John Sloan to Robert Henri, 1911-1926 (Yale)
31 Synchromists to Robert Henri, 1904-1925 (Yale)
32 Correspondence between George B. Zug & Robert Henri, 1919
33 Robert Henri’s letters regarding Maratta (Sloan Collection)
34 Correspondence and information regarding Maratta
Series IV: Robert Henri—Diaries & Notes

This series is comprised primarily of photocopies of informal writings and sketches of Henri’s. Several written diary pages from various periods in Henri’s life are contained here, as well as three sketch diaries, one including several sketches by Henri’s second wife, Marjorie Organ. The Yale collection of Henri’s notebooks is also represented here.

Guidance on Use: All of the items in this collection are photocopies of original material contained in other collections in various institutions. Photocopied items have been marked with their original source on the copies and sometimes-- but not always-- within the finding aid. Any use of these materials requires attribution to the original source of the material.

Box 7
Folder
1. First two pages of 1886 diary
2. 1922 diary (Cornell University Irish Papers)
3. 1928 last diary pages (10 Gramercy)
4. William Homer correspondence with Archives of American Art regional director Robert F. Brown regarding publication of an article on Henri; August 8, 1994
5. Robert Henri’s notes on speedwriting (shorthand)
6. Robert Henri notebooks (Yale)
7. Robert Henri sketchbook, Italy, 1890
Series IV: Symposia/Lectures

This brief series is comprised of notes and information on various symposia and lectures given on Robert Henri and The Eight, spanning from 1929 to 1992. They appear to be a general collection of notes, acquired both before and after the publication of William Homer’s book *Robert Henri and His Circle*, with some of the earlier pieces used as research material for the text. Items have been kept in their original order.

**Guidance on Use:** All of the items in this collection are photocopies of original material contained in other collections in various institutions. Photocopied items have been marked with their original source on the copies and sometimes--but not always--within the finding aid. Any use of these materials requires attribution to the original source of the material.

**Box 7**

Folder

11 Gatewood, Dr. Robert H., “Who was Robert Henri?”

12 McCausland outline

13 McCausland papers (Archives of American Art)

14 Various lectures on Robert Henri & The Eight, 1938-1953 (Archives of American Art)

15 Forbes Watson papers (Archives of American Art)


17 Myers on the Armory Show (photocopied notes)
Series V. Henri Exhibitions & Biographical Works

This series is composed of items relating to exhibitions and biographical works, mostly films, on Robert Henri and “The Eight.” Programs and catalogs from exhibitions of Henri’s artwork make up the bulk of the series, though there is also a chronology and list of locations of Henri’s artwork. Items are in general chronological order, with original order preserved with folders.

Box 7
Folder
19  Robert Henri exhibition at the New York Cultural Center, 1969
20  John Sloan/Robert Henri: Their Early Years, Moore College of Art, 1976; Henri exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985

Box 8
Folder
3  Robert Henri chronology, family tree and exhibition history
4  Lists of Henri paintings, drawings and illustrations, with locations, c. 1960s
Series VI. Newspaper Clippings

Predominantly a collection of photocopied articles about Robert Henri’s life and exhibitions of his work, coming from magazines, journals, and newspapers. It also contains a couple of articles on friends of the artist. A page of original articles from the time of the artist’s death is included, as well as several photocopies of books or excerpts of books on the artist. Articles are arranged chronologically.

Box 8
Folder
5 Philadelphia Press, 12 May 1901
6 Gathered articles, 1903-1930
7 Robert Henri news, 1929-1964
8 Clippings from “Cozad Local”, 1956
9 Cozad family article transcript, 20 April 1957
10 Newspaper clippings 1910-1963 (bulk 1910-1938)
11 Folder: Newspaper clippings: 1930-1964
12 Article on Henri paintings, 1971
Series VII. Notes & Working Material

Along with the Homer correspondence series, this series contains the majority of legwork that went into Homer’s completion of Robert Henri and His Circle. Notes on research, pieces of research from various Henri collections, and non-Henri/Homer correspondence are contained here. Additionally, consulting correspondence on other researchers’ works regarding Robert Henri and the Eight are included within this series. Original order has largely been preserved, but the series has been broken into five sub-series: General material, Research at Specific Institutions, Research on the Eight, Research on Violet Organ, and Publication of Robert Henri and His Circle.

Subseries A. General Research Material

Box 8
Folder

13 Manuscript of Anarchism Chapter
14 “Betsky” 1984
15 Robert Henri as teacher
16 Robert Henri and Science of Painting, notes (1966)
17 General working material
18 Notes for preface, May 1966
19 Notes on letters to Henri from “The Eight”
20 Consultation on “The Immortal Eight,” 1987
21 Letter regarding making of John Sloan documentary, 1992
22 Letters to ROBERT HENRI from Calder, Cimino, Graffly, Kelly, Lindsay, Morrice, Thompson, Redfield
23 Letters to and from ROBERT HENRI, NOT to parents, before 1908 (Yale)—Notes
24 Henri-Gatewood ‘76
25 Robert Henri chapel décor, Philadelphia
26 Henri- Anarchism and “The Masses,” May 1966
27 Art Students League, teacher, 1919
28 “Ash-Can” term
29 Robert Henri and the avant-garde
30 Students and socialism at Robert Henri School
31 Robert Henri and The Conservator
32 Ownership (Thomas Eakins works) survey
33 Henri-Lee, Boardwalk, Atlantic City
34 Ferrer School
35 John Sloan on Mrs. Whitney
36 Notes on Grafly material
37 Cozad
38 Brochures from the New York School of Art (Yale), list of books owned by Henri
39 Proof copy of a biographical statement on Henri, by Homer

Box 9
Folder
1 Academie Julian (Julien)
2 1910 Independents
3 “Corrymore,” Achill Island, Ireland
4 Ireland
5 McDowell Club correspondence, 1912-1917
6 New Society of Artists
7 New York School of Art, summer tour 1907
8 Robert Henri as teacher, August 1965
9 Interviews for book: New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine
10 Notes on paintings
11 Notes on Mari Sandoz
12 John Sloan outline, chronology, and working material
13 Southern

Subseries B. Research at Specific Institutions

Box 9
Folder
14 Robert Henri diaries, letters, scrapbooks, inventory—10 Gramercy Park
15 New York Public Libraries: Manuscripts & Art Division
16 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
17 Yale Henri material (beginning December 1964)
18 Archives of American Art, May 1963 visit
19 Archives of American Art, Robert Henri to Macbeth (business)
20 Archives of American Art, June 1964
21 Archives of American Art, clippings on DuBois & Mora
22 Frick
23 10 Gramercy Park- photocopies of loose papers 8/1965
24 Yale University
25 10 Gramercy Park—Yale University: Robert Henri diaries
26 Yale, photocopies of loose papers
27 Yale- inventory of letters and diaries

Subseries C. Research on “The Eight”

Box 9
Folder
28 Cambridge University, AAA Research material for The Eight
29 Thirty Years After, Macbeth Gallery (1938)/Review of “the Eight” exhibition (undated)
30 Scrapbook- cut up (mostly unreadable—use for citations)
31 Critics and Exhibition of the Eight—including photocopies of articles and images

Subseries D: Research on Violet Organ

Box 10
Folder
1 Organ Family Tree, post 1908
2 Working notes, 1900-
3 Robert Henri- not to use- bibliography
Subseries E: Publication of Robert Henri and His Circle

Box 10
Folder
   4  Correspondence & book reviews
Series VIII: Works of Art & Illustrations in Book

This series contains a mixed collection of photocopies, proof sheets, correspondence, and notes on various artworks by Henri and his associates. The majority of the artwork represented appeared in the published book, though there is some information on pieces cut or otherwise not mentioned in the text. Also included in this series are a set of proofs for pages and images from *Robert Henri and His Circle*, and an index to the Robert Henri microfilm collection.

Box 10
Folder

5    Robert Henri
6    Plates I-III
7    Figures 2-10
8    Figures 11-20
9    Figures 21-30
10   Figures 31-40
11   Figures 41-50
12   Figures 51-60
13   Figures 61-66
14   “Sylvester Asleep”—cut from book
15   “Boy wearing a Muffler”—cut from book
16   “Marine with rock” (sea and cliff), 1909—cut from book
17   “Viv”, 1915—cut from book
18   Paul Cézanne’s “Portrait of Valabregue”, 1866—cut from book
19   “Surf and Rocks”—cut from book
20   “Young Woman in Black”, 1902—cut from book
21   Rubens’s “La Pelisse”-- cut from book
22   Lavery’s “Portrait of R.B. Cunningham Graham,” 1893—cut from book
23   Dummies
24   “Boy with Carafe” newsprint c.1897—cut from book
25   1900-1903 pictures
26   “The Spanish Gipsy” (1912)
27   “Willie Gee” (1904)
28  “La Reina Mora” (1906)
29  Transparencies (“Marjorie Reclining,” color exercise July 3 1916)
30  Index to Robert Henri microfilm
31  Proof sheets
32  Documentary photographs
33  Photographs and slides for book
34  M. Walker Gallery
35  LeClair Henri Collection
36  Index to Henri microfilm, charts A & B
**Series X: Photographs**

Though a few candid and classroom photographs of Henri are included within this collection, the near totality of this series is composed of photographs of works of art by Henri and his associates. The photographs have been arranged in chronological order where dates were available, with undated pieces collected together.

**Box 11**

Folder

1. Works of art—1889-1905
2. Works of art—“The Arched Bridge”, 1899
3. Works of art—Mural at the Fleisher Memorial (late 19th century)
4. Works of art—1906-1916
5. Works of art—1917-1928 and duplicates
8. Photographs of Henri, classes, houses
9. Henri photographs & exhibition photographs
10. Works of art by “The Eight”